



Democratic State of the Union Response Center

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DEMOCRATS FIGHT TO ENHANCE EDUCATION FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN

The Bush Administration and Republicans in Congress are shortchanging America's children and our future by refusing, year after year, to provide the bare minimum in funding required under the new education law. President Bush has frozen, or cut, the maximum college scholarship for three years straight, while the Republican response to tuition hikes is a bill that fails to control tuition increases. Over the coming year, Democrats will work to build a safer and stronger nation where everyone has an equal opportunity to build a better future for themselves and their children.

Republicans have broken their promises to America's children and parents. The Bush Administration has under-funded the landmark No Child Left Behind Act by \$17 billion since the program was enacted, and Congress provided the smallest percentage increase in education funds in eight years. Underfunding education reforms amounts to a tax hike for working families. Local communities have been forced to raise property taxes to pay for textbooks, pay teachers, and keep school doors open. More than two million children will be denied help with learning the basics of reading and math this year and more than one million children will not have access to after-school programs, because Republicans have again failed to make education funding a priority.

Democrats want to keep our promises to children and parents by investing in education reform. Democrats are working to raise student achievement in core subjects like reading and math, demand results from our schools, provide after-school programs, involve parents, and expand early childhood education programs like Head Start. And we are fighting to expand financial aid programs that help young people attend college.

Boosting college opportunities and making college more affordable by stopping tuition hikes, making smart investments, and providing low-cost loans. This year, tuition at state universities increased nationwide by as much as 40 percent in some states. Due to record-high financial barriers, more than 400,000 low- and moderate-income high school graduates who are fully prepared to attend a four-year college will be unable to do so. In the face of skyrocketing college tuitions, Republicans voted to freeze federal Pell Grants at last year's level, rather than providing students with reasonable means to pay for a college education. Democrats are working to make college more affordable by increasing access to college loans and grants.

To enhance education, we must provide full funding for special education. Children with disabilities have a right to a quality education. The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) has opened doors and helped millions of children with disabilities lead independent and productive lives. Unfortunately, Republicans have shortchanged special education by 45 percent. Democrats want to provide full funding for IDEA to meet the needs of the approximately 6.5 million children served under IDEA.

To improve education, we must expand early childhood education programs. Democrats are fighting for more and better pre-school programs, to improve teacher training, to improve accountability, and to increase access to Head Start – a highly successful, comprehensive, early childhood program. But Republicans have essentially frozen funding for Head Start, and want to eliminate the comprehensive health, education, and nutrition services provided to children.

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